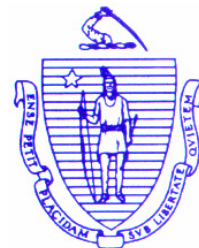




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Marine Fisheries Advisory
July 7, 2003

SCUP BY-CATCH ALLOWANCE FOR FLUKE TRAWLERS

The Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) has taken emergency action to create a 300-lb. scup daily catch limit for fluke trawlers effective July 7, 2003 (322 CMR 6.28). This action was taken in response to reports and documented cases of unprecedented levels of regulatory discards of large and "jumbo"-sized scup by trawlers fishing with large mesh (6.5" openings) targeting summer flounder (fluke).

Since the fluke fishery began, there have been reports of unusually large amounts of "jumbo" scup being caught in trawlers' large mesh nets (6.5" cod-end). Trips conducted in Nantucket and Vineyard Sounds have reported catches in the range of 200-500 lbs. per day. **It appears that the rapid recovery of scup has created unexpected regulatory discards that should be addressed consistent with *Marine Fisheries*' long-standing policy of minimizing by-catch and discards.**

The original decision not to give trawlermen a by-catch of scup during the June-July period was based on past sea sampling evidence. However, it appears that strategy must be re-considered. Catches of scup at this size ("jumbos") and at this poundage level per trip had not been seen during the 1990's when *Marine Fisheries* intensively sampled catches of the fluke trawl fleet.

As the scup limit is intended as a bycatch amount for trawlers in the directed fluke fishery, the current no-fishing days (Friday through Sunday) are amended to reflect the current no fishing days in the directed fluke fishery (Friday and Saturday). Likewise, fluke trawlers will retain the 300-lb. bycatch limit after August 1, when the directed scup fishery opens.

Weirs are permitted to land scup until their allocation is caught while all other gears (pots, hook-and-liners) are prohibited from landing scup until the scup fishery opens officially on August 1. When the "directed fishery" opens on August 1, fishermen using hook-and-line or fish pots will be allowed 400 lbs. per day and allowed to fish four days per week: Monday through Thursday.

Updated Scup Daily Limits, Fishing-Days and Seasons as of July 7, 2003.

Gear	Daily Limit	Closed Season	No-Fishing Days per week	Comments
Weirs	None	None	None	Fishery to close when weir sector allocation reached
Trawlers	300 lbs.	None	Friday & Saturday	Fishery will close when state's entire quota reached
Hook & Line	400 lbs.	Through July 31	Friday, Saturday & Sunday	Fishery will close when state's entire quota reached

Fish Pots	400 lbs.	Through July 31	Friday, Saturday & Sunday	Fishery will close when state's entire quota reached
Lobster Pots	Up to 400 lbs.*	Through July 31	Friday, Saturday & Sunday	Fishery will close when state's entire quota reached

* By-catch in the lobster fishery is allowed. Total weight of fish and conch combined not to exceed the weight of lobster aboard, and scup alone cannot exceed 400 lbs.

For further information please visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.